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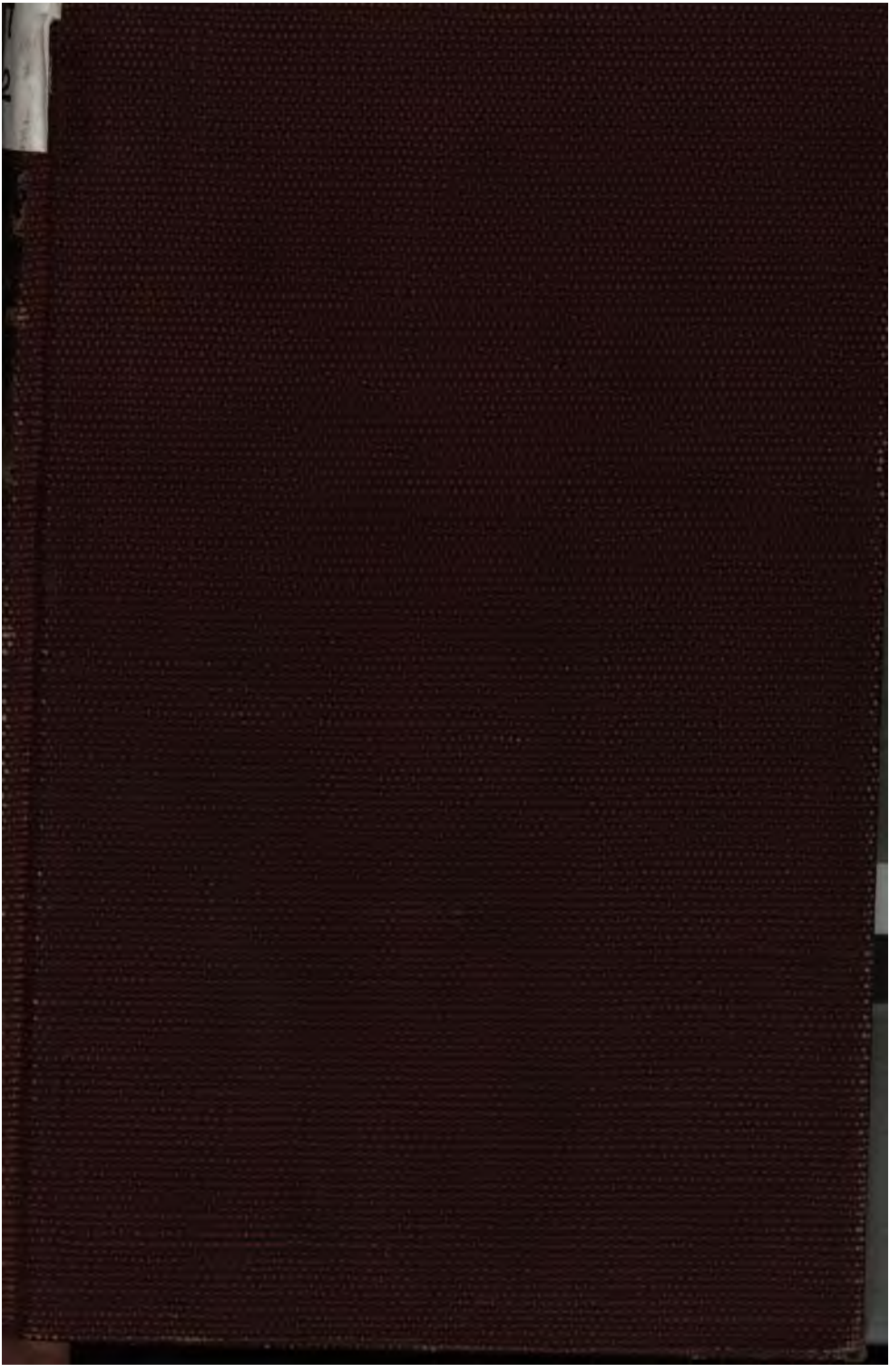

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KNOWLEDGE.

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Nothing can be affirmed more positively of the present age than that it is a transition period. Our silence shows it: no typical utterance revealing the content of the strong spirit with his lot, and literature falling behind among the laggards. Even the cheerful do not speak, for indeed what as yet is to be said? We are not yet there. Speech springs from sight, possession, certitude, and will strike like chanticleer's cry through this murky hour; but the voices we hear are hardly distinguishable from our own imaginings. Indeed, why should we not pursue our meditations in these voiceless hours between the evening of the Romantic movement and the surprises of the morrow, as it were, out in the night air; while in crowded and lighted rooms the arts dance to passionate measures, sending forth now and then a buzz from a world which must appear to us unreal. "The hall-door shuts again and all the noise is gone." As it is said, the knowledge of God is a morning knowledge, matutina cognitio; the knowledge of man is an evening knowledge, vespertina cognitio. To-morrow, for us, the sun will elicit new songs.

At the beginning of the present century, hu-

den of literary scholarship bear to the regions of facts and things in which the arts and sciences are pioneers? To mention only the manufactures —must not Wisdom, who watches over everything human as Providence over all Creation, take cognisance of these as they increase and multiply? We were taught many things at school which we are quite able to teach ourselves later on as we want them, but were not supplied with the keys to the concrete facts of life: how paper is made (Sir Thomas More's friend was only partially able to explain this in Utopia), or a watch, or a steam-engine. The question of the value in itself of such knowledge is not here raised, but that Wisdom should be ignorant of so many things is an anomaly, and indicates some shifting of the centre.

The passion for knowledge, which appeared as a decisive factor in European history four or five centuries ago, had its origin in a half realized sense that the source of all authority, in religion, in science, and in every region of thought, was the knowing faculty, long dormant and unconscious, but now giving renewed evidence of itself in many strong and vague thrillings of impulse. First came the boyish atheism of the Italian humanists, and their efforts to write like Homer and Virgil. A more sober aim is shown by Erasmus and his fellows, who set themselves to make the

"complete circuit of literature;" and to these succeeded the great philologists of the sixteenth century, amongst whom, sign of adolescence, rises the figure of Montaigne, the lover of Plutarch and hater of "books about books," who read the classics as he read life for entertainment and instruction. The next century, in which Bacon issues his manifesto against authority, sees the domain of documents over-passed and the human mind pressing onward to the investigation of nature, while a noisy debate is raised on the relative merits of the ancients and moderns. The Encyclopedists brought to its close the first chapter in the intellectual advance, celebrating the diffusion of knowledge amongst the privileged classes, while those new and incalculable elements of modern life introduced in the influence of Rousseau and Kant were as yet unrealized. The general diffusion of knowledge has rather been the work of the nineteenth century, in which the "grammarian" of Browning's poem is exchanged for the specialist who, in the phrase of our time, makes some department of physical science or art or history "his own," contributing such results as he draws from it to the common sources of a generalized view of things.

The result of this steady tendency toward independence of all authority, and commerce with

the naked fact, is not so far all that could be desired. Our good God is taken from us, the heavens are emptied of presences, and the hero and saint die like dogs. The habit of the human intelligence, so long in childhood, to look outside of itself for guidance, for pardon and comfort, is checked and baffled, and at each turn it is reminded that the venerable church to whom it ran with all its childish cares has no understanding of its manly trouble. As for the poet, it is the winter of his discontent: he asks for truths and he is given facts; and it was in the name of his brotherhood that Keats drank to the confusion of Newton. The age of omniscience is the age of agnosticism. What is brewing in the bosom of humanity, who can tell? We must meanwhile place our hope in the universal quickening of intuition effected by culture. We must believe in the universality of genius. As former generations looked to the literary scholar, as our own age has looked to the man of science, so we must begin to look to the original thinker and the poet. Is it the true conception of life that the normal type of man is he in whom his faculties are dwarfed and stunted, or he in whom they are carried to their highest? Unless knowledge issues in a personality our hope is in vain. All the treasures of learning and invention flow back again in streams

of poetry, utility, and wisdom to the common use, so that what has happened of old may happen again, when some peasant of the valley, in whom the elements are properly mixed, drinks universal wisdom in the stream that crosses his door, and comes forth to teach mankind. It is the vice of the learned to think otherwise, to believe in a privileged class, an intellectual aristocracy, and in the tower of Babel. They do not consider the many tendencies which ensure that the average man, as Whitman said, at last only is important: that the scaffolding shall not rise far above the tower. If science and art could be pursued without intermission: if they were subject to no law of periodicity; or if truth entrenched itself behind an ever thickening growth of technicalities and symbols, then science, art, and religion might be aggrandized, but not man. But in fact the course of things is otherwise. We cannot all follow the calculations of the astronomer, but all can read the newspaper paragraph which announces the discovery of a new planet. We need not be disquieted by the conferences of the learned: when they find out anything important, we shall hear of it, and nature will see to it, that mankind is not divided into inferior and superior beings. The king of science is he who can put into two words the labours of a generation. The street gamin, it

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issues of life and death are less clear than formerly, and the valiant youth hardly cares about setting forth when the ways are not beset with dragons and robbers. The world has great ends in view, no doubt, interoceanic canals, transcontinental railways—it may be interplanetary communication; but science, the good Titan, after unheard-of feats, will find in the end that it has served in the world a mistress whose purpose was flippant, and that its true aim was appreciated by unsuspected and solitary on-lookers. But what then is the world? By the world we mean living from without inward instead of from within outward. The two tendencies may be interdependent and mutually necessary, as an Hegelian might contend, but they are opposed continually as Christ and Anti-Christ, and now-a-days, when the burden of our higher poetry is that "the world is too much with us," there can be little doubt on which side the tide is lowest. Besides, what is to become of the balance if every idealist is not the sworn foe of the world? In face of the world's smiling tolerance, lively movements are originated and masquerade in some antique or novel garb, and on occasion of each new heresy the world sends one of its representatives to be converted, and to hail the new prophet to dinner. Of course the new heresy may then boast of the conquest of the

world. But when the least of men hearkens to the oracle within himself the world is met in the only way possible, and all question of the merits and defects of our own age compared with the wisdom and heroism of times past or future becomes impertinent. "Whatsoever is practised by the most excellent men, that is also practised by others. The world follows whatever example they lead." All are needful, society and the individual, the world and the gospel, Christ and Anti-Christ, but the protagonists of humanity are those who follow an inward conviction, and true progress is to be estimated by every step so taken.

HEROIC LITERATURE.

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It may seem, perhaps, fanciful—but in regard to certain literary experiments of the present age, like those of William Morris in England with the Norse and Teutonic legend, or in Ireland the experiments of our poets with the literary remains of the ancient Eireannachs, exhumed by O'Curry and other scholars, there comes to mind, as offering points of analogy, a trivial incident in Egyptian archæology a few years ago, when some grain having been found in the tombs along with the remains of the dead, occasioned a natural wonder whether they had retained their germinating power. What husbandman would have grudged a corner of his field to that experiment? or, if Spring had warmed and revived the long-tried hearts of this chosen seed, the spilth, perhaps, of Joseph's sacks, and green spicules had duly appeared, would not have curtailed his own vigorous growth of stems ripening for the market, and left the venerable seedlings room to increase and multiply in silence and peace? However, the seed lay dead and unresponsive in the soil. The other experiment, one more hopeful and important, has been made by poets and patriots to whom the literary remains of the ancient inhabitants of this country have sug-

gested the question, whether it be not still available for the propagation of an heroic literature. Whatever be said of these fragments, they tell of a race which ranged over every portion of this island as its conscious owners, drew from it its images and themes, did not cling to a few effete localities on the east coast, but attached themselves to every point of the surface by some association or experience. Now this literature—the experiment of modern civilization having been rudely instituted here as elsewhere—has been swept away, clean as though scraped off by a glacier, and in the ancestral habitat of the Ultonian legend has been set down the Plantation of Ulster, reeking from season to season with its fetid harvest of industrial flax. Is the possibility of an heroic literature then indefinitely removed? Let us rather ask, What is an heroic literature? Is it a literature growing out of the researches of the archæologist, issuing from a few strangely preserved remains of tradition, an experiment of general interest, yet distinctively the concern of the specialist, not without some analogy to an attempt to establish an aristocracy or sacred succession in ears of corn; or is the seed of it strewn by the common breeze, ready to take root wherever the elements are mixed, or, to point our question with a homely metaphor, are there no oats but those found wrapped in the cerements of mummies of which to make our porridge?

Meanwhile, it is not the least significant event of our time, this coming into the hand of each nationality of its own Old Testament or ancient scriptures, even where, as in the case of Ireland, no Moses has appeared to dominate them with his spirit, nor Homer resolved them into epic unity. This ancient race did not achieve morality, and perished in the wilderness; so that the higher conquests are not embodied in its literature, but still remain open to the present inhabitants of the country, to whom a breath of its valour is transmitted in its tales and legends, as well as in the poems of Ferguson, Yeats, and others. The literature of the modern nations covers a period in which what we call progress has been at work: Shakspeare's ironical acceptance of experience or Milton's Puritan passion, however enduring their monuments, are not attitudes in which the modern mind can afford to rest satisfied, and we look more and more in literature for that which shall embody the realities which do not change with our times and seasons. It is in this mood that we have reverted to the primitive literatures of this and other countries. Truth to say, human nature, if the same in its rude outlines, has filled in a good deal since those times, and we cannot linger very long with these victims of passion and touchy sticklers for etiquette without feeling an overmastering inclination to wander off in pursuit of a quite

modern vein of reflection. This inward freedom that we have counts for something; and the poetry which tells of it is the poetry we want, not that which tells of lives saddled with hopeless passions and conditions riveted by fate. It is plain, nevertheless, to any one who read such a creation as the Tain bo Cuailgne, that this race was on the verge of a great poetic literature; that the Irish bards came very near to setting up in Cuchullin a commanding type of the universal world-hero. As yet he is in process of formation from the mythological stage; sun, air, and earth are in a whirl to produce him; and he does not stand finally incarnated on the soil of Ireland as a human personality, taking upon himself the common lot of man. Only now and then the figure of a "small, black-browed man" appears, looking kindly and somewhat sadly forth; but even then he shoots out some tongue of fire like the sun's corona, his hair rises up brown and crimson and gold, he is distorted out of human semblance, and speeds far and wide with unfair supernatural advantage. A great inheritance surely awaited some Irish Vyasa or Homeros, who should have pruned this luxuriance of marvels and shown the "one favourite of Erinn's poets" in all the sweet humanity which appears in his combat with Ferdia or at his last battle of Muirthemne. Perhaps if Christianity had come in its purity and less as a rival thaumaturgy, a sublime

strain might have entered into this old poetry and a chapter of world-scripture flowered from it, as the Bhagavad-Gita rose out of the Mahabharata. But as it was, the old bardic spirit was found unprepared and shrank away, cherishing a hopeless dream, and reappearing only for wrathful protest, confronting the obscure beginnings of a new order with the majesty of a vanquished ideal.

In the heroic literature of ancient Ireland, as in all the ancient literatures, a man is put forward, armed with a weapon (his proficiency with which is understood and frequently emphasized), his relation to men being that of their prototype, his relation to the universe that of its protagonist: the meaning of the universe, its thunders, its motions, its potencies, is centred for the time in him and his toils. the sun-god deserting his chariot to assist him, sea-shapes rising to console him; as it is told of Finn and his companions, "every step they made was heard through the firmament." At the present time man is dwarfed by his own achievements. It is not the abysses of time and space, the upper and lower infinities, which reduce him to insignificance—in these he exults, dilates, and lives: it is his own music which fills him with melancholy yearnings, his own philosophies which unsettle him with doubts, his own sciences which taunt him with the limitations of his understanding, his own luxuries which dis-

satisfy him with a normal condition. As Browning says, "'Tis looking downwards makes us dizzy." Set a man anywhere under the sun and he will adorn any landscape, and at night the empyrean will light his face; but in the midst of his own ingenious contrivances, in a library, or as a social unit in one of his large towns, he does look small. There was nevertheless a time—called the heroic period—when these sciences, arts, inventions, which have proceeded from him, were latent within him, and when he himself, a great, sombre fellow shouting his pedigree at you when he spoke to you, knew all that he owned, and clearly marked the frontiers outside which he owed homage to the invisible powers. Or, perhaps, his troubles began as early as in that sleep spoken of in Genesis, in which virtue went out of him, and waking he beheld by his side a smiling shape, the first of many such sleeps, in which one by one all the joys and virtues once implicit in his bosom took shape outside of him to tempt and madden him with the fallacy of owning what he rightly was; till at last he rolls bankrupt on the ground, a shell, his power gone from him, civilization like a robe whirled down the stream out of his reach, in eddies of London and Paris, the truth no longer the ichor of his being but a cloudy, evaporated mass of problems over his head—this is he, homo sapiens, poor, naked, neurotic, undeceived, ribless wretch—make what you

can of him, ye bards ! Ask him to hurl Cuchullin's spear, or Ajax's rock, or to practise with it a little somewhere out of earshot of the gods' inextinguishable laughter. Depute someone to represent mankind nowadays as adequately as did Hector; let him come down on the plains before the towers of civilization; such was the good old test of a man's worth, how much he is good for standing by himself—only there, away from his citadels, his shrines, his resources, can heroic song take cognizance of him. Or think out some situation where civilized man will show to true advantage; show how he, the darling of Prometheus, though no longer amounting to much as an ethnic figure, yet controls a universe within the universe, and has realized the Titan's remotest dream for him by getting hold of the very thunderbolt; paint him as he wields it, and show how the heroic consciousness is well lost for that general acquaintance with things divine and human wherewith his mind is daily deluged. Or, if war must ever be the theme of heroic poetry, set him on some huge ironclad, where nature bates her breath pending the torpedo-shock, or in the battle-field, swearing coolly at the alighting shell—even there something is wanting, possibly the element supplied in the Homeric poems by the interference of ever-living gods. It is to be feared that such heroes as the nineteenth century can put forward—as General

Gordon, or Burton, or Livingstone—suggest to the main army of men a pathological rather than a poetic treatment on the side of their intercourse with gods. Besides, one doubts if Cuchullin or Achilles would have called it fighting to stand up and be potted at; and though for purposes of heroic treatment the intellect demands a hero on both sides, there is something intrinsically unsatisfactory in the notion of Gordon and Tolstoi pointing cannon at each other at Sebastopol.

If in these challenges to the bards of civilization there be noticed some feeble parody of Elijah's biting speeches to the prophets of Baal, his successor Elisha's interview with the Syrian leper and recommendation to him to bathe in Jordan rather than in the prouder waters of Abana and Pharphar, may be recalled by our mention here of the publication at the beginning of the century of Wordsworth's "Lyrical Ballads." Nevertheless, when we ask, in spite of all praise or disparagement of the literature of this passing century, whether after all it contains the germ of anything new, we are inevitably attracted at its outset to the appearance of the man who first sang contentedly his own joys and experience: therein clearly revealing, as it seems to us, how the poet who has the experience of civilization behind him must differ from the poet of a primitive age. In all ages, no doubt, it is from the poet's soul that

the poetic light is cast upon the world, and not from the world upon the poet's soul. When it is cast upon the world of action, whatever virtue and beauty is there reflects it, shines and becomes illustrious. In our own age, whatever Walt Whitman may say, the world of civic action is too turbid and dull, and the elements of beauty and virtue too thinly diffused in it, to reflect the poetic light; but the poetic light illumines as much as ever the soul of the individual. "In all this what is there to lament?" Why, indeed, should the poet grieve if that happens with regard to art and poetry which he was glad enough should happen with regard to philosophy and religion; and if it be discovered at length that there is no definite localization of the poetic theme to antiquity or to futurity or to any place or person outside of experience, that if it is not in him it is nowhere, and that somewhere or other in the world for him there exists something to reflect it. On the whole, so far as regards the poet himself, is there not an improvement in these changed conditions which make him instead of a pensioner a pioneer, and which constrain him to live more truly in a world of his own creation than if, for the reproach of this pigmy age, he could revive in our fancies the forms and accents of antiquity. But are not the streams of myth and legend greater than all the waters of experience? The real question, however,

as Elisha seems to have felt it needless to point out to Naaman, is not now as to the size of the stream, but much rather of its power to heal leprosy. But to those, on the other hand, who vex and torment themselves like the prophets of Baal (with whom everyone sympathizes) because civilization sends down no spark of inspiration upon their altars, we would say: It is not your part, ye bards, whatever Walt Whitman may say, to seek your theme in the things of civilization, nor fitting that you should raise your voice against them, like a bee which has wandered into a room out of the meadows, and whose note is changed to an angry murmur, and which, seeing the light, dashes itself against the panes, as you dash yourselves against the panes of formalism and respectability, or wastes its vigour in a sting, but—if such wisdom is to be looked for in bee or poet—to endeavour to escape by the way you got in, or through whatever open window, knowing that as a pane of glass is adamant to a bee's proboscis, so are formalism and respectability to the imprisoned poet!

Nevertheless the original difficulty remains; how to get a man once more into poetry? and here we must remember that the poet is not so distinct from his kind as is the bee from those powers who control the opening and shutting of parlour-windows. No, the poet, as we say, is pioneer; and there may

therefore occur a moment when the poet is left to enact his own theme if he would see it enacted at all. The poem that is to justify the modern world must, in the first place, be a man. The poetic response to that nature which surrounds us implies some completeness in the soul, a rallying of its virtues and detachment from desire, an intelligence leaping to the truths which concern it and in ceaseless commerce with them, which make of the personality of the poet the prevailing factor in his song. In truth, it is not too much to say, that as the character of the hero corresponded formerly with that of the warrior, so in an age demanding the realization of the ideal it corresponds with that of the poet. His song must celebrate a continual victory. People are fond now-a-days of praising sad poetry. But really, what is sad poetry? If there be such a thing, the less we have of it the better. Poetry is only sad when it is something less than itself, when it has to speak the language of doubters and sensualists, or perhaps when it is yoked to a theory: but even a small hint will recall it to joy and perfection. The theme of the poet is the virtue of man: how then can the poet be he who despairs of man? Poetry has been in the world now, we may suppose, for some thousands of years, during which time it has been down in Hell and up in Heaven, and has lived amongst

palms and amid ice, in court and cabin, in tavern and temple, in market-place and woodland; and only the other day, in the hills of Westmoreland and in New England, its voice was as the voice of the returning birds in Spring. The sublime sorrow which is subdued in the sense of consolation and 'consumed in the fire of knowledge,' of that let the poet be capable and let him communicate it: but the chagrin of the puny egoism, the howl of disillusionment on discovering the truth of the homely adage that 'you cannot eat your cake and have it too'—we must firmly refuse to be carried away by our feelings so far as to call it poetry.

APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION.

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What misgives any sincere-minded man in too much talk about beauty, truth, art, God, and so on, but an instinctive sense that to consider such things too much as facts outside experience is the beginning of formalism, incredulity, vulgarity, ritual, and of all that riff-raff which incumbers the paradise of a true life? In a highly civilized period wisdom, or the fully awakened human consciousness, is resolved like light through a prism into its constituents, so that in whatsoever place a man labours the full-blended beam does not light his task, but this one sees nothing but physical fact, another only metaphysical truth, another utilitarian, another æsthetic, and so forth, and it is hard to find a spot exempt from these variegated effects, or at last to trust one's own eye-sight. And as pigments answering to the seven rays may be compounded into a semblance or counterpart of white light, so university education mixes the seven sciences into a semblance of wisdom called culture, paints B.A. on the young man's forehead, and is justified of her child by his measure of worldly success. However, genius alone can use and combine these pigments of cul-

ture so as to produce original effects; and doubtless it is not more of these pigments that we want, but more genius. In fact, to stir out of the world of our own realizations is to emerge in a regions of semblances and counterparts, amid which "the wise man seeks that which is homogeneous with his own nature." There is no wisdom in the world which wholly meets a fresh case; and the honest questioner is a truer product of culture than the 'accomplished' person. A youth's assumption of infallibility is wont to be rebuked by his elders, but in many cases it is only because he can still afford to see things impartially, and because some stronger illumination lingers with him of that light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. The youth who ponders with robust mind sociological and moral problems, as if with a naive presumption that there is an answer to them, is much wiser than the man whose experience has only vouchsafed to him that they are insoluble, and who has finally relinquished all interest in them: for experience is like Proteus on the beach, whom the hero went to seize, and who changed into all manner of repulsive or alluring shapes rather than deliver his secret, and would infallibly have wriggled away at last but for the tightening of the heroic grip, to escape from which at length he told what was inquired

of him. The world to the young, and to the ever-young! It is a fatal concession to number the aspirations and transports of youth with its illusions, as if the mysterious hopes of youth had any reference to worldly success, or as if it had been demonstrated that they are not, as Plato and Wordsworth conceived them, glimpses of a higher reality which it is the function of intellect to recover. Philosophers are sometimes incapacitated for practical affairs as great mathematicians for arithmetic.

Without and within: there is an outward reality and there is an inward reality, and from the interaction between the two, between nature and man, flows thought and joy. Culture and devotion discover and purge the inward perception, the electric current of consciousness which passes through the being of each man, attractive and repellent, converting perception and knowledge to realization. Our likes and dislikes are not to be arbitrarily over-ridden by external authority, but are the natural custodians which admit or exclude what has or has not the pass-port to our interior conviction. Give me myself; the best of yourself is for me the second best, something to augment our furniture and paraphernalia, new implements for our already over-cultivated soil, not an enlargement of our frontiers. Nay, let a man be himself, and it

is enough; if truth is truth it is communicable, as fire will light indifferently a candle or a prairie. There is the same unity in truth that there is in flames, which thirst to blend together and make holocaust of all that is. Truth is indeed a dangerous element, and if liberated among us would probably burn up all which makes our snugly-ensconced civilized life a possibility. It is fitting that there should be natural limits to its spread in non-conducting interspaces of insensibility and conventionality, while enough is left to warm our hearths and toast our daily bread; it is fitting that save in the interval of millenniums it should not break out in the lightnings of Sinai, or in avalanches over Gomorrah, but in a highly civilized period should more and more be got under control, available at any moment from books as from lucifer matches, and shining with mild and beneficent glow in poetry and metaphysics. Let the fire then slumber in the flint, or burn with a dim symbolic meaning on the cathedral altar.

Walking in the woods or by the seashore or among men, it often happens that a man experiences a rising of the tide of perception, life inundates consciousness, and as it recedes casts up in his brain a melody, a gospel, an idea, to which he gives utterance. After such a moment of absorption into the creative spirit of the universe, this

waif of utterance left with him seems a poor thing to him, he scribbles it down in a shamefaced kind of way, looks on it doubtfully from time to time, till someone to whom he shows it looks amazed from it to him as to the serene creator of this miracle. Hence his reputation rises as a walking mint of such things; and civilization, which builds up a second-hand creation out of these waifs of the creative tides, carefully stows it away as another stone for its monuments, caring very little for the spiritual experience underlying each one of its artistic and scientific manifestations. It is true that to be of use they must conform to a certain style, but the shells cast up by the sea have an inevitable style. We do not quarrel with that economy which provides use and function for every created thing, but we do say that no one ever created anything who had this secondary consideration of its function exclusively or chiefly in view: who had not been immersed in the creative tides. This fact explains why science, art, religion, when most splendidly established in a community with money, honours, and institutions, begin to lose their vital and operative energy—because, namely, men get to think of art, religion, science, as having an objective validity and virtue, as dominating the world into which the individual is born, and to be conformed to, that they are not made for man

but man for them. Thus in religion we have the doctrine of the apostolic succession, in which all the sects have a vested interest; while art seeks regeneration in theory; and science, if one may guess, is vitiated by the assumption that discoveries grow out of one another more than they do, and are not a devout mental vision of the operations of nature. No enthusiasm, says Novalis, no mathematics! The telescope and the microscope may pry into the upper and lower eternities, but they cannot confer that magical second sight which communes with the meanings of nature. The spirit that bathed the cosmos in some lightning glance is now mutely folded in some poet's breast. Methods, inventions, institutions have one fiery moment of their use, and then moulder. When a state has grown to its full stature and become fully conscious of itself, individuals begin to fall away from it, because the individual aspiration is no longer incorporated with the social instinct but has emerged, and individualist experiments of all kinds become the outlet of the higher activities; not patriotism, wars and politics. Well for that state whose streets at such a time, when luxury begins its tower of Babel, a philosopher paces, haughtily rendering to Cæsar his due, and whispering in the ear of the youth the clue to further progress! Some complain that Christianity de-

stroyed the apostolic succession of science and civilization, not rejoicing in the tendency of humanity to safeguard itself from time to time against the tyranny of its own achievements by losing sight of them and seeing how much, standing by itself, it is the gainer from them. Gœthe's objection to Lutheranism, that it kept back the quiet course of culture for centuries, points, we must suspect, to some frigid limitation of his sympathies. Yet, as we mention his name, let us not pass without saluting one great exponent of the commandment: Die and come to life!

Perhaps the greater part of scholars of to-day consider an aristocracy of intellect to be the desired goal we are aiming at; which would be all very well if this aristocracy could forestall further risk of intellectual revolutions. Renan has pleasantly suggested that it would be necessary to this end that the aristocracy should be able at any moment to destroy the planet. That an intellectual aristocracy will form, and is forming, is likely enough, and it must be allowed they are, and always have been, a friendly and philanthropic class, willing even to co-opt you into their body, especially when you are dead; but we fear the very notion of such an aristocracy is founded on that conception of knowledge which we are bent on declaring fallacious, as the property and not the element of the human mind. Men are from

time to time born into the world to live by their feelings rather than by the accumulation of lore in the chambers of the brain, and to test the world thereby, and whose cry of dissatisfaction or reproof summons to a common standard similar feelings in the universal heart of man, traitors to intellectual aristocracies, which disappear, rumbling away in vehicles by night, leaving the treasure-houses of culture a prey to these unreasoning insurgent masses of instincts and feelings, long repressed in respectable bosoms, but at length clamorous for the bread of life. Certainly, if an aristocracy of this kind do get finally established in supreme authority, things will go on differently from the way to which the study of history has accustomed our minds, indicated by the saying: stulti surgunt rapiuntque caelum. If the claims of Paul, for instance, had been referred to the Graeco-Roman intellectual aristocracy, as the claims of Mesmer were to the Gallo-American, perhaps Providence might have been outwitted in its designs with the species; perhaps Goethe (if in that case he would have come into being) would not have had to complain of the retardation of the course of culture. There have been cases —to mention no less questionable names than Pascal or Swedenborg—where the verdict of the aristocracy has not seemed to matter very much; but it will be different, we confess, if the future aristocracy have in its hands an engine like that suggested by

Renan. We beggarly idealists, it is clear, will then have to give up saying that science is chiefly valuable for its spiritual images and suggestions, and such-like drivel, and we shall see our own theory of knowledge being power held over our heads with a vengeance! Meanwhile, great Death lends a sort of grim neutral countenance to the democratic idea, and seems to ensure that the aristocrats will have at least as much as we to lose in the exercise of their prerogative.

Nature abhors perfection. Things perfect in their way, whether manners, poetry, painting, scientific methods, philosophical systems, architecture, ritual, are only so by getting into some backwater or shoal out of the eternal currents, where life has ceased to circulate. The course of time is fringed with perfections but bears them not upon its bosom. The river goes to the sea, time to eternity, and we mortals desire perfection, but unable to repose in the universal purpose and find satisfaction in fullest action, we cling to the banks and limits of the stream, and where a temple is mirrored in quiet waters or a philosophy opens a secure cove, we drift in to reflect beauty and wisdom, and hear the great floods outside pour ever onward. But alas! we stagnate. Nature meant us not altogether to corrupt and be resolved into our constituents and promote a rank vegetation of works of art and wisdom, but to live, to be glad drops of water hastening to

the sea, not thinking without exultation of death, or versed too exclusively in the limits and constituents of life. The problems of life are not intellectual, or scientific, or theological, or teleological, exclusively, but practical, inclusively. This truth of which men talk is simply, as Wagner exclaimed, sincerity; the ideal is the intensely real; the human is divine; beauty is in our perception; and etymology alone suggests that holiness is health. In something of the sense in which it was said that the ideal state would be that in which philosophers were kings, let us say that the poet's love of facts will save the world.

SÆCLORUM NASCITUR ORDO.

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The names of Rabelais, Cervantes, Voltaire, who represent in Europe the earlier stirrings of the modern movement, denote a startling capacity in man to surmount and forsake his past. Beneath the corruption of good customs the spirit of satire awakes, and monasticism skulks off as hypocrisy, chivalry as mock-heroism, and ecclesiasticism as bigotry. These names have got into the annals of mankind as representative of living forces equivalent to those displaced, and men who, like Ruskin and others, seem to deny progress are obliged to blink or misinterpret facts. However, it was, perhaps, not till towards the end of the last century that the new spirit, having revolutionized the schools, approached the generality of men in the person of the smooth-talking David Hume, who demanded of each man what he had so far carried with him, the clue of tradition. Since then an almost universal break with the past has left us in a situation in which we must look for one of our number to take the next confident step. A period of passive culture has come to an end; it now remains to be seen whether humanity is still capable of evolving anything answering to the magnificent

moral and religious conceptions of the ancients, or of affirming them independently. A Newman or a Lacordaire, with an abnormally developed historic sense, or the wrecked ingenuity of a Coleridge, may set themselves back into the first century of our era, but the rest of us cannot afford to stifle the homely intuitions of common-sense: we believe, but our belief, which concerns the things of yesterday, has hardly the value of our shrewdness and scepticism, which concern the things of to-day. The sun that shall rise to-day will be the same that shone yesterday, but yesterday's sun will not warm us. Are we then to call this cold light of reason, to which all things are subjected, the grey dawn of a new epoch? The moon of theology, turned toward the distant illumination of a revealed truth, is sunk out of our sky, or lies there like a pale wisp of cloud which nobody notices—is it that the sun is rising? Shall we call our arts the dreams of a night? When we are cold, it is noticeable that we hardly believe in warmth, and in like manner we are disheartened because, in this cold light of science, we can discern no possibility beyond a wire-pulled existence to-day and an annihilation to-morrow. Is it for this that Hume roused us from our dogmatic slumbers? To rise early seems an easy and delightful thing overnight at the concert or the theatre, but the actual experience is often

one of damp and chill, with a sun powerless to pierce the grey contexture of night-spun mist and draw forth an ode from the sluggish bosom. It is good, nevertheless, to be stirring, and to carry about with us all day a breath of the morning, which unfolds within us along with the advance of the outer day. The night is great, and great things are seen in it; but great also is the morning. The Middle Age beheld the face of the heavens, and its soul went up to them in art and prayer; yet for many things daylight is required, as for military operations, ploughing, gathering in the harvest, travelling in unknown ways, for all in short that in household or state affairs is included in the word Progress. The world lies like a log till some one starts up with the conviction that his own age has as good a right to live as any preceding one, and that the pain of renunciation is momentary. Already there have been optimists amongst us, men with matutinal thoughts, sons of the morning, whose faith is not reminiscent but actual, and who look rather to the things which are before than to the things which are behind. It is time that the test of every man's faith should be no longer his opinion of what has occurred in the past, but the truth which he can affirm out of his own nature.

For who does not feel that to make truth entirely objective, as positive science does, is to imply

that everything in the universe is instinct with a meaning but man: that this aspiring, suffering and good humanity is nothing but a mirror contrived to reflect the shows and harmonies of the sensible world? And yet what else, it may be asked, can we pretend to be? "Der Gott," sings Goethe, "der mir im Busen wohnt, Der kann nach aussen nichts bewegen." Physical science might seem to have some advantage over literature in this respect, but doubtless nature feels no more virtue go out of it in our electric telegraphy and kinematographs than Niagara in a mill race: nay, if the whole stream were converted to use, Niagara would be Niagara still; and, on the whole, thought may be nearer to the source of power when pure and not applied. The career of Napoleon suggests power, but not a power which reflects any new honour on human nature; he is but the biggest wave of human passion rolling highest and furthest. He had will-power, brain-power, dæmonic power, but no power to reveal the issues of life and death. We are moral agents, perhaps? but science can furnish a disheartening theory of morals. It is religion which has made the daring attempt to give a meaning to life. Religion is the guardian of intuition, the sanction of enthusiasm, the refuge of virtue. Religion decides what is the essential part of man's nature, and addresses itself thereto. Religion pro-

vides life with a motive, and makes it possible that every action shall be a choice. Science is impartial, but religion ranges facts in their hierarchy. It is the doctrine of the potentiality of the individual which enables man to confront without dismay the objective infinity disclosed by science, and encourages meditation, without which life is all on the outside. Without a certainty neither the poet can write nor the hero act nor the student study. The strong and the weak are in this respect confounded, and helpless swimmers in the gulf of disillusionment. Without a certainty those capable of wisdom refrain from thought and action, and those who value the rewards of life in themselves crowd everywhere to the front. Without a religious certainty poetry cannot be criticised, nor philosophical enquiry directed, nor youth be educated, nor justice dispensed, nor merit recognised; while scholarship runs into particularism and pedantry, and the men of action harden into bloodless dilettanti and moral fixtures. We can take no delight in the infinite of nature unless we feel that we too are infinite. As the earth needs a sun to shine upon it, so life lies cold and dark unless it be dressed in beams unborrowed from the day. Something may be made of life when it is regarded as a state of war or of probation, or as an inn, or, as Goethe said, as a kind of hell; but though perhaps on a Spring morning, or while

music is being played, or in an agreeable society, or while enjoying a well-deserved rest, or at other fortunate times, we may feel for the moment satisfied and as if life were a good in itself, yet nothing is more brittle than the combination of circumstances out of which such a moment is made, and the worth of life depends for all who feel or think deeply on its reference to a higher reality, the apprehension of which is religion. But religion is dead. At least we must concede to Renan and Voltaire that testimony is not experience, and that an historical faith has a prevaricating ally in reason. We can hardly now think ourselves less entitled to an original relation to the first cause than the Hindus or the Jews. To tell the truth, it was the admirable Darwin who in a manner forced on us that definite break with the past for which our posterity will bless or curse us. Galileo, Kepler, Newton, had made the egoism of this little planet sufficiently ridiculous, but this enlightened humility was not unfavourable to the religious instinct; the dignity of man stood unimpaired; and Kant, the last of the giant brood of dreamers, could still subsist and breathe a larger air within the subjective stronghold of pure cognition. That soaring endowment which we still call genius had hitherto supported lonely speculators to the plane of vision, but it was evident that this plane inclined nearer and nearer to

the level of ordinary intelligence, or that ordinary intelligence was gradually rising to that altitude, and that the two must sooner or later intersect. The point where this actually happened is marked by the appearance of the evolutionary philosophy, which solves in the region of fact and commonsense the problem which had excused by its very existence all kinds of pretensions of thaumaturgists. It finds the cause in the plane of the effect. It cuts the ground from under the feet of metaphysics. This blaze of commonsense puts out the stars; and as with the heavenly lights, so with the once luminous names of poets and mystics, which are seen now, as when you light a match to examine a glow-worm, to be so many prurient egoisms, each engaged on an affair of his own, and no more sidereal than the rest of his grubbing kindred. Of the thaumaturguses and thaumaturgists of past and present times, the least said the better; we can only say that it will not occur again. He will be a clever thaumaturgus who will do anything with the eyes of the evolutionary philosophers on him. Genius comes under some suspicion as being thaumaturgist in tendency: genius is obscurantist and reactionary and in need of a course of mathematics. Evolution knows nothing of exceptional temperaments, such as geniuses have hitherto been, or of dreamers who cry with Keats:

"O for an age
"When I may never know how change the moons,
Or hear the voice of busy commonsense!"

It knows only of householders and shareholders who ride the central flood of evolutionary tendency, blown along by soft gales of natural selection, "youth at the prow and pleasure at the helm," upon whom the whence, why, and whither press not too persistently, and who watch with pity or amusement such of their number as weary of cooped-up ignorance and leap into the flood, to climb a high mountain or set foot on something more solid than life itself. If evolution takes cognisance of these at all it is as the naturally rejected. And, indeed, if the voice of society were the voice of nature, and if nature were only 'careful of the type,' it is writ large in the annals of mankind that it is the naturally rejected, the madmen and fools and children, from whom redounds to the mass of men a perception of the meaning, the mystery, the beauty of life. But from time to time in history nature weighs one man in the balance against society, and by casting herself into the scale with him, weighs up society, with its whole mass of scruples, safeguards, privileges, seductions, institutions and scandals, till it kicks the beam; and perhaps this need not seem so wonderful when it is remembered that he but reveals to men that he is

more themselves than they are. The centre of human things flies hither and thither, where life is deepest and fullest. It is not the function of genius to add new trophies to civilisation, but to disclose to men new depths within themselves.

At the present time, when men, owing to the discovery that so much of what was thought to be God turns out to be nature, await with some justification a rationale of the religious instinct, preferring meanwhile to believe in the possibility of flying over the Atlantic or of telegraphing to Mars, rather than in providence and prayer, such examples as we have of men whose faith is a fact of their lives rather than a tenet of reason and of the affections, serve as the chief indication of an active virtue and potentiality still residing in mankind. Rousseau, Kant, Goethe, Wordsworth, Carlyle, Emerson, Whitman, Thoreau, Tolstoi—such names as these may seem light and irresponsible ones to set over against the cassocked and authorised exponents of the structural beliefs of society, and there is not one of them against whom some objection is not valid; yet each of them stands for an affirmative principle in the strength of which he was content to live and die. It is to them we must look, amid this clamour of the Babel-builders, for some indication that man is still more than his works and exists as the ancients knew him: the measure of all

things, obedient to the invisible will, speaking wisdom, beholding beauty, imagining unity, knowing good and evil, hoping in spirit, rejoicing in action and confirmed in knowledge; for the sincere and believing man, when creeds and doctrines lose their efficacy, exults in the new responsibility which devolves upon the moral initiative, and sets him anew amid the shows and potencies of nature with unfolding powers of thought and action. It is when the code of ethics has become an inner principle that life begins to teem with possibilities. This is the new fire stolen from heaven to kindle the hearts of men which were waxing cold in rationalism, artifice and painful self-imposed disciplines of altruism and abnegation, when the scandalous Rousseau filched morality from the altars and disturbed the old order, substituting the internal for the external imperative, the regenerate impulse for the social fetish. For a moment at that time a new vigour as of the ancient world rushed into the life of man, he realised what life was before his sins and shortcomings had fixed in him, before habit had made him an automaton; his weight of cares and responsibilities fell from him; he revisited as an invalid the mountain tops and sea-shores he had known as a haughty youth; he experienced a mood of mournful exultation in Byron, he felt in Wordsworth the wistful, all-atoning happiness of re-birth: 'the stars

above him, the moral law within him'—it was so again: but the work of the world had to go on, he returned to his tasks and to his great possessions, not without renewed hope and capacity, which have not yet perished; but the memory even now becomes more remote, and democratic habits and institutions are closing in upon him, like the feudal.

It is natural to speculate about the future of the race and about the capacity of man to cope by means of science with his growing difficulties, with scarcity of fuel, scarcity of food, increase of population, as some think; and against these to balance the growing resourcefulness of man himself, his passion for knowledge still expanding with his mastery of the elements, the constitution of the universe so minutely detailed in his brain that if it fell asunder he could, with the stipulation of Archimedes, piece it together again. No change, however, that we are likely to see or can imagine in the physical estate of man, for better or for worse, would make life more different for him than the reappearance in his life of a factor which for the present has passed mostly out of it, a transcendental certainty. Men of science admit that something is wanting in the universe to answer to the moral element in experience, but say that the great generalisation toward which all the sciences are converging may supply what is wanted: and this may be said to constitute

the higher sanction of the present labours of commonsense in the exact sciences. This belief that what is only forthcoming from within may be discovered without, this endeavour to compass as an available body of fact and doctrine the truth which resides in the inmost being of man, is what we term building the Tower of Babel. Of course, the serried ranks of science and commonsense have an easy answer to the transcendentalist: if truth be against poetry and religion, so much the worse for them! Our truth may not be the whole of truth; there may be, as you would say, subjective and objective truth; but meanwhile it is truth, and what have you to say to that? Nothing, except that we must turn now and then from age to age to see how poor *homo sapiens* is getting on, as after all he is the party whose interests are chiefly involved. Is he noble? Is he happy? What are his wishes? What his needs? What are these facts worth to him? How in general does he stand? These questions are certain to be asked from time to time, asked by many voices of humanity blending in one spokesman, and then there is what is called a humanist movement, or general remeasurement of all things by man. Once upon a time, in a moment of deep feeling and soul-disturbance, humanity decided in favour of God, immortality and judgment after death, and suffered ecclesiasticism to clinch the matter, to rivet that belief

upon it, and to keep it fixed in historical faith while the globe swept round the sun. But by and bye humanity began to feel a dead-weight on it as it swept along; reluctantly and after long silencing of natural compunctions, it perceived where this dead-weight lay—in this fixed faith, apparently, or in that which now adhered to it, in a universe of which the very brass and iron were now perceived to be in fluidity. Let it go then! and fragment after fragment falls away into limbo. A thousand voices straightway woke: hope, song, knowledge, the modern movement, and man saw himself almost divine, excepting death, which indeed in the stimulus which exalted so powerfully the present tense, could almost be forgotten. But what a creature is man! He can only be a god by a kind of intoxication. 'What distinguishes,' asks Goethe, 'men from gods? That these behold the endless stream of things, wave on wave, moving before them: us the wave lifts up; the wave engulphs us, and we vanish!' The eternal distinction between men and gods reappears in this our inability to maintain a steadfastly objective view of things, with stiffened knees and necks unbowed. Our godhood declines towards fact-grinding, and the generaliser shrinks to the specialist and the slave.

Yet what demand is this that we make for a certainty—we that must trim ourselves daily and hourly to the humours of the body and the shift-

ing of the climate; we that welter in an obscure physical dream removed not much above that of the fish or the baboon, and are hardly apprised of reality save by death or the dentist; we of whom Pascal said that 'naturally man knows only what is false and thence indirectly infers what is true.' Are we to demand the privilege of archangels,, and wide-ranging seraphs? Perhaps we must wait till this garish light of commonsense and science is darkened, and another day of progress closed, ere those truths are again brought within our ken, in the light of which dawns for the soul its hope. Religion must be but a proximate matter with us; perhaps it is hardly desirable that it should be otherwise; religion is the consolation of the soul separated from its happiness: heaven will be fluid and social at last, and peopled by 'men as they are men within themselves.' And yet what the wise poet says, that 'in the earth we find our happiness, or not at all,' is also true. Man exists to realise his ideals; and the religion which is the sanction of his higher life should have a positive use, as well as one merely negative or consolatory. It should ensure to all men the reality of the inward life. To safeguard society is no further its function than it is the function of the law of gravity to keep mankind from flying away. When religion is more careful of society than of the individual, and more afraid

of facts than of falsehoods, it is time for Herod to meditate a new massacre of the innocents. In truth, we have to speak of religion as we speak of the poet—not that there is such a thing in our time, and yet really he exists, whether in the womb of time, or as a type, or indeed in every man; and as we welcome and praise all verse and all thought which suggest him, and for the moment identify *the* poet with this person or that, so the religious certainty kindles the life and speech of this man or that, while no man is its repository. Neither in poem nor in philosophy nor in ritual can we count on a sure retreat, a 'casement open on eternity:' and so, cast on a fluctuating eclecticism, we have little to say for ourselves either to the traditionalists or to the grovellers in worldly wisdom, and may take to ourselves the words addressed to Solon by the Egyptian priest: 'O Solon, Solon, you Greeks are still children, and old man among you there is none!' 'What mean you?' asked Solon. 'You are all young,' said the priest, 'in your souls, for you have in them no settled opinion confirmed through ancient hearsay, and no knowledge hoary with time.'

REGENERATE PATRIOTISM.

REGENERATE PATRIOTISM.

A difficulty like that experienced by religion in maintaining its ground at a time when the discovery of new facts has modified the significance of the facts on which it has rested, is experienced by patriotism at a time when culture and civilization are tending to merge the national feeling in the feeling of the brotherhood of man. This apparent loss of the patriotism which builds up a state; which, perhaps, in the union of a few farmers to resist oppression, has found a soil in which new possibilities have unfolded for mankind, is one of those irreparable natural facts, like death, or the mingling of a stream with the sea, against which our philosophy is tasked to discover what solace it may, or to what new factor the displacement of the old is due. No doubt it is the most imposing production of time, a nation lying at its point of maturity, an organic whole, with refined social circles, noble and altruistic rulers, iron-willed soldiers and sailors, grave merchants, a prosperous populace, inventors, poets, philosophers (alas!), all inequalities compensated in the unifying sense of nationality—"the while that other so majestic self stands by." And yet nations have to die as well as individuals; and a wise sociology, like a wise philo-

sophy, must needs look death in the face. It is one of those facts which show that the attitude of man throughout history is in most respects passive, and that it is chiefly his part to behold and acquiesce in God's processes. In the fifteenth century the Protestants make a bold dash on the stronghold of sacerdotal arrogance and carry off the Bible; and now, thinks Protestantism, God shall get his due, and we shall proceed in the construction of civilization with that matter settled! But a little while later this ark of the covenant, though well watched and guarded, has lost its power to strike dead the impious Uzzahs who would lay a profane hand upon it, even to defend it, and Protestantism has quietly to abandon the prerogative. Next comes science, which annexes the moral idea; but things now move so rapidly, and we are so well taught, that already we prepare to adapt ourselves to fresh eventualities. And as it is with the history of the human soul, so with that which is part of it, the history of society: and patriotism, like religion, has at length to cast about for its sanction and its object. Why, if my country's enemies have hanged my grandfather, and subjected one of my great-aunts, the flower of my family, to a series of studied insults, which it was her solace in dying to think that her brother's descendants should avenge —why should I hate my hereditary foemen if haply I number among them the saviour of my soul? It

may even be my conviction that the tradition represented by that country against which the example of an unmatched line of patriots exhorts me to take up arms, should submerge the tradition which my own country carries onward through time like a load of hereditary incumbrances. It fares, therefore, with traditional patriotism as it fares with the traditional faiths, which build about themselves the walls of negation, walls which may serve one generation against its old age, by a less possibility the next generation, and by one still more remote our children's children. What then is the affirmative principle of patriotism, seeing that it is not that which brings one patriotism into conflict with others? Is it the right to say, "This is my own, my native land?" But it is not mine at all: it has come to belong to a small number of the sons and daughters of privilege, amid whose fair champaigns and river-borders I should perhaps be glad to call some nook of land my own. Is it the common inheritance of historical memories? And yet the past history of our country, any more than the past history of ourselves individually, is not necessarily something to be proud of; and as for its battle-fields, all the battles that were ever fought in history, and resulted in victory to the rights of man, were fought on the same side. In any case, indeed, it is the part of a philosopher to accept the past, and to make the best of the best that it has left him. Again, is it

an ineradicable instinct like filial affection, of which the grounds are in our human composition? Yet if the indifference of the child be but the result of parental indifference, it is the less undutiful, and in the case of patriotism, is obligation to rest altogether on one side?

It must be owned that popular patriotism submits with no better grace than popular religion to the criticism of philosophy: and yet the criticism of philosophy differs from all other criticism in this, that it is a search for reality, so that wherever philosophical criticism applies itself, we may assume that it is the belief of philosophy that a reality lies hidden. And is not patriotism concerned that its reality should be discovered? Nay, let this be true, though every patriot a liar! Philosophical criticism would make patriotism not a mere traditional and historical legacy received on trust from generation to generation, and gathering continually a fresh increment of liabilities, but a fact in the life of each man; varying in each country as its flora varies, while yet in all lands flowers turn to the same sun and are watered by the same rains. The law of patriotism is therefore to be sought in the annals of mankind rather than in the traditional patriotism of one's own country: and these afford many glorious examples of men who suffered as martyrs or grew old as the fathers of their country. For it is by spiritual laws and

not alone by brute natural laws that nations as well as men grow to maturity, and that which directs and controls their growth is not left entirely to the natural law, but to the courage and will of men themselves, some of whom, when they have seen the principles of justice menaced by external or internal violence, have preferred or risked death to seeing the fair experiment of nationality frustrated. So far the traditional patriotism finds its spiritual sanction. While the growth of a great nation is going forward, great men have found full scope for their activities in serving it, and great poets in uttering its voice. Yet there comes a time when this "other so majestic self" is perceived to have withdrawn, its history is written, and it is inquired not only what is the duty of the citizen, but what is the function of nationality. The individual, grown wiser than his institutions, regards them with a critical and comparing eye. And when the poet sees his hope menaced, derided, denied; when what is to him the only reality is contemptuously allowed him as the working hypothesis of his poetry, for which if he secure a pittance he is regarded as a clever fellow; and when, if he would consent to praise institutions, he must adopt the vulgar estimate of 'poetic truth'—shall he be more zealous in defence of his country than of his ideal? No; he will take civilization at its word. If it can do so well without him, let it do so!

"When each man gets his due," says an angry poet, "the nation dies!" and his despairing conclusion is that most men should therefore be satisfied with less. But it is not a matter of choice; the nation dies when it has discharged its function, dies, if it has been a good nation, beautifully and composedly, like an aged mother. That purpose is, to bring the individual into communion, in the first place with his fellow-citizens, and then with the whole brotherhood of men: to enrich the life of each with the life of all; to form, fashion, educate, and finally to liberate, an individual. As a member of society the individual identifies himself with its interests, feels the shocks which try it, grows with its growth, and strengthens with its strength; yet the nation is only so far a spiritual entity as it receives this from the individuals who compose it. The man grows, the nation dies; the world grows young, society withers. It may be creditable to the good heart of man, but hardly so to his good sense, that he does not acquiesce cheerily in his own progress, but that the birth of individuality is celebrated, not only with flowers and hymns, but with revolutionary anger and tears of blood. What is the reason? It is the war of Zeus with Kronos, of the individual with society. The former is young, irresponsible, stepping gaily into new worlds; the latter reproachful and jealous, devouring its children. On the one

hand we have the naughty freedom of Rousseau, the second childhood of poetry in Wordsworth; on the other, angry reactionists like Burke and De Maistre. Between the two how does patriotism fare? Which yields to the other in love of country? The one sees it in the light of past memories, the other in the light of hope and enchantment. If the one is too reckless of the value of precedent and tradition, the other is unduly incredulous of what the future may bring forth. Thus each nationality, having come bravely down through time united in self-defence against the world, is at length divided against itself, the old against the young, the rich against the poor, tradition against initiative. The old retain the nomenclature and mechanism of nationality, but the real nation is where its soul is, and the soul of a nation is the men in it who have attained unto themselves. Wherever a man has found himself, the purpose of nationality is fulfilled in him. The whole political mechanism has him in view.

Patriotism, in fact, in the old sense, is only possible when the whole life-interest of the individual is comprised within that of the patria. When individuality is hatched, and has become independent of the parent community, the relation of the individual to it must suffer a change. Instead of a receiver he becomes a giver. Of course, he still

owes his patria fire and water, in return for which he should do his business with integrity, give his vote honestly, respect the altars, etc.; but the gifts of the spirit are no longer from his country to him but from him to his country; and though the necessity of dying for his country is not reduced in the same way as is the occasion for it, he will far oftener be called upon to defend his ideals from the insidious disparagement of his friends and fellow-countrymen, and may even in rare instances have to accept at their hands, with what assurance he can command, a cup of hemlock. Then indeed patriotism is brought to the test, when the whole honour of a community in the face of time devolves on the moral initiative of the individual, and doubtless it is such men who confer upon the patria, for the most part against its will, its true glory.

This higher or regenerate patriotism, which has its ground in the relation of man to his fellow men and to nature, rather than in his political relation to the state, may appear to some chimerical, yet in the light of only one fact which may be mentioned, it is the traditional patriotism which may begin to appear illusory. For it is this new relation to nature which has found its poet, and which is pre-eminently the theme of modern poetry. It is in Wordsworth that love of country is once again blended, as traditional patriotism traditionally is,

with religion. Say what we will, this new relation to nature is the very atmosphere and medium of all that is best in modern thought; and while we moderns have this, though we must maintain a guilty silence when plied with searching questions as to several articles of our political and ethical creed, we have a great structural fact on our side. Well lost are all our creeds and catchwords if time restore us the poet drawing his lessons from nature, and breathing his spirit among men. Those lines, a stumbling block to the learned—

> "One impulse from a vernal wood
> Will tell you more of man,
> Of moral evil and of good,
> Than all the sages can."

—simply enunciate the indefeasible right of the modern man to confide in his own intuitions as men in other ages have confided in theirs. For the modern man does not regard himself, like the Stoic or Epicurean, as the puppet of destiny, nor altogether as a malefactor, like the early Christian, nor quite as the victim of an illusion, like the Hindu: a thousand filaments of realized relation and sympathy connect him with this nature which he surveys and uses, and his soul with the soul of the universe. He may be lost, as the mediævalists tell us, but the recurring Spring moves him to artless hymns, and a purified imagination exalts him, at

least temporarily above the life of the passions. His thought has come forth from the study and the cloister, to wax and bloom in the open air, where nature's self takes it into her keeping and instructs him, perhaps as never before, in her ways and processes, granting him space for his utmost speculations and promise for his fairest dream. "I did not know," says Whitman, "that I contained so much virtue!" He did not know, that is to say, that there was a co-operation throughout the universe with what was best in him, and that there was no need to resume the slough of his sins and hide in unsunned places from the wrath of God. He did not know that his virtue was a fact in the universe. "Two things fill me with awe," says Kant, "the stars above me and the moral law within me." Nature at last throws aside her veil and shows him authentic beauty, holiness, and wisdom; he views in his turn everything that God has made, and behold, it is very good. It may be at the expense of some of his natural force that he no longer lives within the solid walls of his fleshly personality, like Plutarch's heroes, but loses himself through the telescope or the microscope or in the lore of other days, and has been known to shed tears over snowdrops or the notes of the nightingale. He is at once so much less and so much more than he used to be; so much less as a limited personality, or in rivalry with the heroic selfishness of

Cæsar and Alexander, yet so much more in proportion as the universe has augmented and supplemented his powers with its secrets and properties. He is no longer bounded by the power of his arm or the might of his brain, but by his sympathies is liberated and purified. It is a notable change this, by which nature is no longer hostile to us, and so far as we understand it is no Maya or illusion, but is an extension of ourselves, our guide, support, teacher, champion, and friend without end. "Rightly read," asks Thoreau, "is not nature that of which she is commonly supposed to be the symbol merely?" The modern poet, who is vowed to the interpretation of nature as well as to the untrammelled expression of human nature, sees in his native land a portion of nature, and as love of the neighbour is not diminshed but increased in love of mankind, so love of the patria is not lost but found in the love of nature. Shall not this soil be the seat of the fairest ideal yet known to man? It is not for nothing that we were born in a particular star, not for nothing that we were born in a particular country, and, by Heaven and Earth! our boughs shall spread and our roots sink in it! "True to the kindred points of Heaven and Home"! When we are true patriots we shall love our country less for any of its memories or battle-fields or legends than simply because it is under our feet; because it is our bit of the earth's crust, the

piece of soil from which we see the stars, the place of our experience and scene of our experiment, the firm ground on which we can bring to the test the philosophies, religions, politics, literatures of the world: where we have plenty of room to fail in and to succeed. Your compatriots may be dissatisfied with your patriotism if you absent yourself from their commemorations, and are imperfectly versed in the tale of your country's wrongs: still, you may rejoice in a true relation to your patria if you have good inspirations in your rustic walk. Perhaps your patria, if she would speak, would not refuse you even the glorious civic title, seeing that you can find something in her as she is, and are not for ever setting her aside with schemes of improvement. It is, perhaps, to you that she will send the genius of her secret places, the spirit of her floods, mountains, and promontories, an awful presence, unheeded by those in quest of her shamrock, to touch your lips with an aboriginal utterance: mother nature herself, indeed, manifesting herself as the tutelary spirit of his native soil to some favoured being, who is thereby gifted to add some words to the sum of human utterance.

No doubt it is more than a sentimental illusion that the land in which we have come into being, and been brought through society into communion with the thought and history of the world, demands our love and protection as a mother-country. In the

ideal republic of Plato the child did not know his mother, and so his breast was freed from all disturbing affections and sympathies, and his heart set full on knowledge. Of all the mothers whom he saw and knew, one might be his, and so, it may be, his interest in all was elevated and sustained. And so, in an ideal condition of things, it is possible that wherever we travelled we should feel as though in our mother-country, while the politics and internal troubles of each country were ignored, as in polite conversation the facts of digestion. As it is, however, our actual mother-country is known to us, claiming querulously our errant affections, and no longer like a stately matron sending forth her sons to heroic wars and bidding them return with their shield or upon it. Pity instead of pride inspires the songs of the poet at this spectacle, and two laws war in his soul, the law of the social affections and the law of individual freedom, so that it seems he must choose one while yet neither without the other is worth the choice. A thing unmeet to betide a poet—to be compelled to choose! And yet that necessity comes to the poet as to all, and upon his choice much depends beside his own happiness: the true happiness of the mother country in great part depends upon it—whether she shall grow old without hope, with her pains and maladies increasing upon her, or renew her youth in

the imperishable springs of spiritual knowledge. Knowing therefore this far better than the mother-country, he will take courage, and firmly and deliberately choose individual freedom, meanwhile adopting towards his country a tone against which she may exclaim as unfilial, but in which she will presently acquiesce with grateful pride. "No, no!" he will say, "my patria! I will persist in seeing thee a virgin mother, made of the nearest thing to God that we know, the magnetic and teeming soil, and will still behold thee beautiful and unprofaned, no palsied beldam with whiskey on thy breath and a crucifix in thy hand—two things I never loved! The growth of the body is toward age and corruption, but the growth of the soul is toward youth and immortality; and having become conscious of thine own soul by means of the songs of high-minded poets and the doctrines of serene philosophers, thou shalt prepare to meet death, raising a grateful paean to the gods, who have given thee strong and upright sons to cherish thee and quicken thy spirit! Parent and nurse of men, raised up by God to take thy part in the conduct of the human destiny, thou shalt not lack honour from me, from thy birth in a past how distant! down through thine heroic youth, of which thou hast many tales to tell, to times more recent when thy fortunes were altered and thy faults found thee, and thou wast constrained to mate with

an unloved stranger, and to bring forth sons in affliction! He and thou art old now—yet it is doubtful which is in the fairer case—he with his cares which crowd meditation from his soul, or thou that mayst abide in resignation. Wherefore take courage! Make clear your spirit! Be of good cheer! Look forward and not back, or backward only for some shining lesson or example! And so at last look to die, being full of wisdom as of days!"

THE "THREE QUALITIES" IN POETRY.

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The poetic gift is a variety of the philosophical, a consideration which throws some light on the history of poets. The poet praises beauty, strength, joy, intoxication, courage, riches, rank, magnificence—why then is there not a universal instinct amongst men to crown and foster this being who is the voice of their souls, and why is it left altogether to himself to make his happiness? Why were the greatest poets most wretched, and the happiest those who looked least to the world for their happiness? Life being lived from within outward draws its renewal from within, and the great poet sinks a well of such renewal to satisfy his own thirst: but what credentials can he offer for his ingenuous self-revelation in a world whose life is all on the outside? With the best intentions, the world can hardly be expected to do him justice. Moreover, as the philosopher seeks to reduce the shows of the universe to a meaning, so the poet values them as they supply him with a word; seeing which in the man the world is cold to his real coldness, though it accepts the homage of his art. He stands midway between the world and wisdom, a pillar of fire to the world, a pillar of cloud to the philosopher.

He hopes to achieve the synthesis of enjoyment and enlightenment. But though his face is turned to the world, it is from behind, from philosophy, that the voices he hears come: it is in truth, in vision, in reality that he must find peace. Poets are the infancy of the coming race; philosophers are the age of the race that is passing. Philosophers are confirmed in experience; poets are inspired by hope. The philosopher has once been a poet; the poet, after many vexations and disillusionments, will one day be a philosopher. Philosophy consorts with poetry as age is thrown with youth, while the world is absent all day on its affairs, and it is this old friend whom the poet plies with his artless questions. Poetry is a never-ceasing wonder and interest to philosophy, which sees itself young again in poetry and eager to take possession of the world, and it is more at home with this child than with the grown-up world which neglects it. Philosophy speaks with best authority on poetry, and one of the chief bequests of philosophy is a criticism of poetry.

A criticism of modern poetry as drastic as Plato's criticism of Greek poetry is what we want in literature at the present day. Our critics lie on their backs and look at the clouds: the husbandman, who has committed his hopes to the soil, scans the heavens with another kind of interest. They do not construct an ideal republic and decide what poetry

they will allow into it, and what not. Criticism is without a criterion. It is philosophy which recognises in poetry a form of the universal, and which sees in the poet man in a universal relation. Technical criticism is, of course, best left to the gilds of poets, but in criticism of the essence the ultimate critic is the philosopher, who in his survey of man in relation to nature cannot omit the consideration of poetry. The interest of philosophy in poetry is therefore the measure of its reality, and the true critic is not merely one skilled in external standards of comparison, and whose appraisement of a poem is but as the judgment of a horse-dealer on a horse, but one who can discern amongst poems those which are the genuine utterance of humanity. The criticism of craftsmen and connoisseurs is insufficient, because they do not bring poetry to the test of inner principles, nor view it, as philosophy must do, if it take cognisance of poetry at all, in its universal relations. The literary circles did not receive with much enthusiasm, a year or two since, Tolstoi's discussion of the question, "What is Art?" Poetical questions, it is thought, are to be settled by poets: but the ecclesiastics thought similarly of ecclesiastical things when laymen chose to inquire into them and the modern movement began. Circulation or stagnation! That formidable book was the doom of the cliques, and of great augury for poetry, asserting

as it did, the interest in it of the best men, and demanding the liberation of the poetic as well as of the religious idea.

There is a point in the history of poetry up to which it unfolds itself spontaneously and by inherent laws; but when the philosophic consciousness is awakened, if it be not regulated thereby, it tends more and more to separate itself as a special craft from the main interests of mankind, and is regarded as containing its own criterion and not as having it in the nature of man: a fallacy similar to that which has left the stately Catholic Church far in the wake of human progress. Poetry protests against such a fate by its very nature, by commending itself with a thousand charms and holds on the memory to the consciousness to which it assimilates itself. More than any other product of the human mind it retains its subjective character, the mood and breath of its creation: the more objectively perfect is its utterance, the more it remains subjectively efficient. It would seem therefore least likely to become anything like an institution; and yet it has been tending to become one, and must become one more and more while the criticism advising it continues mainly technical and comparative, and is not philosophical and moral. Poetry, when it has approached a technical perfection which might have satisfied Rossetti, will make a discovery as painful as that made by the

good Catholic Church when, at the height of its perfection as a system, it found that the religious genius of humanity stood outside it: poetry will find that poetic genius stands outside it. In truth, we may wonder if this has not already come to pass in some measure in the age of Whitman and Wagner, or when Carlyle is denied by Matthew Arnold the rank of a true "man of letters."

The criticism of such ardent but harassed idealists as Shelley and Wagner, who saw in art the refuge from a squalid reality, can hardly satisfy those who have learned from Wordsworth or the descendants of the New England Puritans to regard poetry simply as a fact of life. We seek in literature and art, not a shrine to creep to from a refrigerating planet, but an ark to carry us through the deluge. The artists of Europe take fright at this intellectual anarchy of democracy, which is perhaps to do for the feudal civilization, in another manner, what the barbaric invasions did for the ancient world: obliterate, absorb, and transform it. Before this invasion of averageness and commonsense, this heartless and profane jocularity, this universal advantage of insensibility, this mixing of the elements anew, art, by an instinct in one way suicidal, in another self-preservative, severs the living bond of its connection with the familiar interests of mankind, and entrenches itself within style, technique, and

mysticism. This liability of art to become straitened after a periqd of enlargement is to be accepted as part of its natural history; it is for man to catch a glimpse of the larger purposes of nature, which does not undertake to guarantee the preservation of every instrument it uses. To maintain the arts and doctrines and to support the crumbling shrines, is a task which it abandons to man for his consolation.

Pending the emergence in European thought of fundamental beliefs, by which all things must at last be tested, a philosophic criticism of English poetry might be instituted on the basis of that doctrine of the "Three Qualities arising from Nature," held by the ancient Hindus to govern life in all its relations, to determine the nature of every affection, thought, action; and which are named in the order in which they are surmounted: *tamas*, the quality of indifference, ignorance, delusion; *rajas*, the quality of passion, inciting to action; and *sattva*, the quality of enlightenment, or spiritual knowledge. There is, perhaps, nothing in the doctrine foreign to Greek and Christian or to modern thought, and much in all of these (as in Plato's Republic) may be translated into it. The notion added by the Hindus of an ultimate emancipation from these "qualities," or from existence itself as we understand it, is rather an intellectual necessity than anything as to which we need trouble ourselves, and is, perhaps, not more

frightful than Kant's conception of the "thing in itself." If we turn to English poetry, and consider in the light of this doctrine, its gradual unfolding, we shall find three stages of growth suggested: one answering to the spiritual torpor and animal spirits of boyhood, the second to the passions of adolescence, and the third to the serenity and conviction which are the achievement of life. In the first period, out of which the great name of Chaucer rises, before destiny has awakened to full self-consciousness the powers that reside in a nation, while it is still an organic rather than a political unity, and the psychic passions still slumber, we may speak of *tamas*, or spiritual indifference, as the characteristic and legitimate quality, perfectly seasonable, while life is still mainly physical and fallow. In the second period, the insurgence of the emotional life and awakening of the reason bring the first manifestations of art. A national drama would seem to belong to that historical moment when a nation is passing from an organic to a political unity, when life is ceasing to be instinctual and is becoming self-conscious. Art is the efflorescence beneath which is matured the fruit of wisdom: the form of the expression of passion: and hence it has been truly said of the perfections of art, whose secret modern culture strives vainly to achieve by study and discipline:

"In the vaunted works of art,
The master-stroke is nature's part."

Most fleeting in its phenomena, it permanently characterises the national thought from which it originates. In its functional aspect, it objectifies experience to the intellect. The Shakspearian drama is the literature par excellence of the *rajas* quality. It sounds the depths of experience and discovers that there is one thing needful. In the Puritan movement, that "grave experience" to which England owes its superiority, and which finds a voice in Milton, we see passion passing into aspiration; and later on we find the *sattva* quality, or the quality of enlightenment, to which literature had previously attained in rare passages, in the new simplicity inaugurated by Wordsworth.

Though there seems thus to be an historical succession in the appearance of the "three qualities," and though one seems to color the production of one age and another of another, yet the three exist finally side by side; and in a great national poem, for instance, the physical basis, including the merely local, particular and temporary, would be the *tamas;* while the *rajas* would contribute the elements of passion and beauty held in fixity by their natural accompaniment, art; and the *sattva,* like snow on the crests of the loftiest peaks, would crown with eternal wisdom those passages which had mounted

loftiest in passion. It is this last which wins the homage and recognition of philosophy, whose interest in art is otherwise mainly pathological and perfunctory ; but to the heights reached by poetry it must itself ascend from time to time for confirmation and invigoration, and have them in view even from the market place. In general, we may say that degeneration in literature is a reversion from the *rajas* quality to the *tamas*, while its normal tendency is from the *raja* to the *sattva*. Thus in the Elizabethan age we see the *tamas* quality persisting as dulness in an hour to which the *rajas* is proper, and so in our own day we see the legitimate productions of the *rajas* persisting as belles lettres into an age athirst for the *sattva*. In this sense we may interpret the saying of Novalis, that it is the problem of literature to produce a sacred book. The advance made by poetry in the nineteenth century is not so much in direct achievement as in ground prepared and expectation raised, and the diffusion of Milton's lofty conception of the poet by our modern prophets. We must not expect a perfect poetry to arise as the sanction of things as they are, in which perhaps the most poetical fact is that there is no poetry: yet the Jews did not more confidently await their Messias than the moderns, taught by a long series of philosophic students of literature, have learned to await their poet. It is a great step made,

that we agree to regard the poet as the renovator of the spirit of man, and the object of the imaginative faculty as not romance but reality.

It is not, however, altogether the fault of modern poetry if it does not come within the cognisance of philosophy, as Greek poetry came within the cognisance of Greek philosophy. The relation of philosophy to poetry is now of a somewhat different order, and lies in that renewal of the soul in nature, celebrated by Wordsworth, which, as it makes the man in some matters the pupil of the child, appealing from experience to intuition, and from the wisdom of the brain to the hope of the heart, likewise disposes philosophy to seek from poetry a lost principle of assurance. This is the child which in these latter days has been born unto philosophy; and philosophy if it is wise will acknowledge this infant, not expecting from it all at once a metaphysical system or a fine art, but satisfied if the hope of the world, which seemed dead, is alive and young again in it. Those writers who have written in the inspiration of this new birth, particularly in New England, have been reproached with desiring to destroy institutions and to break with tradition. But they desire to break nothing: they are only satisfied that whatever breaks was no final tie; and as for the future, theirs is the higher faith that every good influence is cumulative and ensures a good

tradition. Between an institution and a tendency what inspired man will hesitate? Every institution has once been a tendency, and from every institution a tendency escapes. The only optimism is that which perceives good influences to be cumulative, and bad disintegrative.

OPTIMISM AND PESSIMISM.

OPTIMISM AND PESSIMISM.

The imagination of the modern world has not so far been strong enough to take a comprehensive survey of past and present, and pronounce whether mankind at large stands higher than formerly in the scale of being. For in considering progress we have to remember that our own civilization is not the only peak which man has ascended from his primitive condition, but that the phenomenon of progress is repeated again and again, as life is repeated, so that to each civilization seems alloted a certain progressive capacity, as to each individual a certain amount of vital energy, and progress fails at last no less surely than vitality. To-day the fire is kindled with the Anglo-Saxon; yesterday it was with the Italian, and to-morrow it may be with the Slav. This phenomenon of a full-blown civilization which is with us to-day has existed before, existed and perished, and it is not apes but gods that move in the dawn of our history: bequeathers of sublime traditions and venerable lessons, in which every moral situation of experience is anticipated. To pronounce our own civilization essentially superior is out of the question while we are still learning from the old: and it is well to content ourselves with the

only solid advantage we can claim, that we at present hold the stage. The conception of evolution seemed to irradiate the historical records of mankind with a new meaning, and to open to progress an infinite vista: yet of what might reasonably be looked for, any sign of structural change in the most advanced type of man, there was no sign, so that we might seem to see the whole scale of evolution exhibited contemporaneously on the face of nature, as its constituents; and if one were to hold that forms are fixed, but that the spirit educates itself by entering each progressively, he would have no facts against him. It is acknowledged that the increase in the achievements of mankind is not accompanied by an 'increase in the mother-wit.' Memory is increased by exercise, and not by contrivances which save it trouble, and likewise with courage and virtue and all the qualities and powers which make a man. For man puny, irresolute, foolish, thoughtless, and immoral we need not in most cases go to look beyond our own threshold; for man robust, contemplative, uttering large sayings of universal application, we turn to our bookshelves, and revive our feebleness in the old wisdom, whose words fall upon our spirits like drops in the sand. Our knowledge, in place of being our power, is our weakness. Nay, this very fact, that the nobler part of man, his hopes and religion, are

finally looked for in literature and not in life, and as the progress of civilization accelerates itself are less and less looked for even there, till it becomes a thing of wheels and pulleys—in face of such a fact as this have we less warrant for saying that virtue goes out of humanity in each one of its ingenious contrivances than that a new power is added? And who are the men who have been a healing influence in modern thought? Is it not those who in regard to the progress of civilization are to be called reactionists, those who preach the gospel of simplicity: Wordsworth, singing of meditation in the wilderness, or Carlyle, with his ironical saga of the French Revolution? And to material progress there are limits discernible, unless a radical change be effected in the instinct of the masses. A book like that of Henry George commends itself to reason as indicating to our civilization the path of continuity, but when will that reform be effected? Will it be next year, or next century, or next millennium, or when the government can promise to set apart a day for its discussion? It comes to this, that so long as we expect from society what only we (who are as ineffectual as we are) can impart to it, we shall be like Horace's rustic, waiting for the stream to run dry that we may get across. And meanwhile, with no more intermission than the stream, do the generations flow onward in a

more turbid flood, as the population recuperates itself, not, as in ideal republics, from the loins of the wise and chaste, but evermore from the obscure millions with their blind passions and unsatisfied desires, who will by no means accept assurance from the disillusioned sons of privilege, that the prizes coveted are illusory. Long before the barbarians finally threatened Rome, a perception of social degeneration moved the poet to write:—

> Aetas parentum, pejor avis, tulit
> Nos nequiores, mox daturos
> Progeniem vitiosiorem.

And yet there remains in most minds a kind of presumption, when all is said, that our civilization contains within it a greater promise than any preceding one. Any reluctance we may feel in saying so, differing as it does from the complacency of Persia and China, is not the least among the good symptoms. The absence of dogma, by which free thought is permitted as free trade; toleration, fair play, and the inquisition of public opinion; the improvement in morals and sensitiveness of the Christian conscience, which if it rob history of incident and individuals of force, leaves intellect at leisure and at liberty; democracy, education, and the enfranchisement of woman; the increased means of communication and intelligence, and free passage round the globe, which seem to remove one chief

cause of the fixation of former civilizations; above all, the advent of science, which has seemed to catch the initial clues to a complete reading of nature, inferences from which, based on exact knowledge, must transform and check all the conceptions of men: all these considerations may afford some pretext for believing that mankind in these ages has decided for good as never before, and reached possibilities never before achieved. And that mankind has an incomparable opportunity in these things is not to be denied: much rather it is to be insisted that their whole value lies in the opportunity which they afford; but the disposition of men is to look to society for what is only forthcoming from the individual, and so the opportunity passes. We expect a new poetry or a new religion to come within our ken like a new planet, and forget that religion and poetry are at this end of the telescope. What avails it that we are richer in knowledge if we are beggars in being? What avails it even that science reverts to a spiritual explanation of the universe, if the word is delayed which speaks to the potentialities of the spirit, and enables us to confront infinity with an answering eternity of hope? In other ages the Christ, the prophet, and the poet awoke in man: spoke, sung, and acted; and as the man, with all the experience which the years bring him regrets in childhood a lost secret, so the modern world,

with all its inventions and talents, regrets the loss of a vision for which it would almost be willing to be a child again. So fair does now that time appear that it derives the inspiration of life almost wholly from memory. This continual tabulation of new facts—call it science, if you please, but not knowledge: call it civilization, but not happiness! Formerly the poet knew no facts but such as were fruitful in his mind, such as could be named in his songs and stored in his memory: what need had he indeed of more? And the facts he knew were the simple and primitive facts of which he has lost sight, contact with which restored him as Antaeus the touch of the earth. Let our hope rather be that this acquisition of natural knowledge is but a preliminary, a space cleared for the expatiation of the spirit, a revelation of the void which the soul is to fill with a plenum of love and meaning.

Progress is evident: yet who is able to distinguish true progress from that hurry-scurry and jostling competition of self-interest which religion declares illusory? No study of history unfolds the law whose calm operations we might contemplate. Outside of the street, we think with relief of the central sea, or the calmness of the geologic periods, which perhaps like the tortoise will come up with the hare of civilization when it has wearied itself out and lain down to sleep. And not only from the

turmoil of human life do we turn with relief to nature, but to the habits and ways of man's humbler companions on the planet: these have their haunts, their customs, of which they are never tired. The swallow does not ask the cuckoo 'Where are you going for the Summer?' nor the wren gossip of the brilliant marriage of the bull-finch. We know when the bear has retired for his winter sleep, and when the shoals of herring and mackerel come up from the sea, and we are able to profit by their wise and stately punctuality. But we men have no time to be young and time to be old, no pairing season, no alternation of action and meditation. If our civilization could develop some such habit as the Indian of retiring at the approach of old age to solitude, or if, with the certainty with which a Chinaman or a Malay can with a little opium erase from his mind all the records of care, we could enter the state of meditation, and remain therein for a season, we might then seem to excel the lower animals in lofty endowment as much as we excel them in cunning. It is not till we come to the records of men of genius and are able to consider man not only as a political but as a poetical animal, that we find the same romantic interest in his actions and intuitions as in the instincts and habits of the 'lower creation.' The most we have in general attained to so far is the reading-habit, which so puzzles

the dog when he wants us to go for a walk or the cat when she wishes to get on to our knee. Perhaps the general adoption of the habit of tobacco-smoking, even if itself a vice, marks a stage of progress no less clearly than the application of steam-power. It is at times a relief to turn to the accounts of 'unprogressive' peoples, as they are called, with their sublime mythologies and sacred books, or to the peasantry, with their folk-lore; though indeed true progress may be at work in these communities as much as in ours, just as it is chiefly in sleep that a child grows. The Chinese, for example, are at this moment and have been for many ages, engaged in cultivating the memory, in which faculty they now excel mankind. Shall we say this was not a worthy enterprise? The ever-increasing complexity of means by which civilization copes with its growing difficulties, must not be mistaken for progress. When the present civilization comes to a stand we shall begin to see what our progress amounts to: see that it is real, but not, as Socrates would have said, 'as the many suppose.'

This life is an enigma—on that all are agreed: is the secret a joyful or a tragic one? Is true knowledge the disillusionment of the wordling, or celestial lore? Are we to honour our parents whole-heartedly or with a reservation by which they must appear culprits to the clear-eyed interrogation

of their offspring ? Is the poet the perfect dupe ? Is life poisoned at the springs ? Or is there a reality, the knowledge of which is true life ? On the one hand we have the pessimist averring that existence is a mistake, reality nonentity, and that all the consolations of life are negative. On the other, we have the patent fact that joy is the condition of life, and accompaniment of all power. The philosophical basis of hope is no doubt as difficult to establish as the immortality of the soul, and perhaps the most salutary objective fact we have is that the teachers of humanity have been those who have taken cognisance to the utmost of the ills of life. People talk of a religion of sorrow, as though one were to be looked for in any other quarter. Strip life of all its allurements and accessories, the illusion and drunkenness which the luckiest of us sees through, and what remains ? Has hope still been sighted ? Or is the joyless and the loveless breast possessed of the sinister truth ? It is true that some have seemed to go as far as the farthest, and announced despair in authentic tones, as Leopardi, who writes (in character): "Whether these sentiments of mine proceed from a morbid condition of the body, I know not; but this I do know, that sick or sound, I trample on the poltroonery of men; I reject vain consolations and puerile illusions; I have the courage to endure the privation of all

hope, to gaze unflinchingly on the wilderness of life, to blink no whit of the misery of existence, and, in a word, to accept all the consequences of a philosophy which, if mournful, is at least true; and which, if profitable for nought else, yet wins for a resolute soul the proud satisfaction of stripping off the mantle from the veiled and mysterious cruelty of human destiny." Yet let us not assume that because some out of chagrin and ennui, baffled pride and pain, have hurled defiance toward Heaven, and the strong spirit gone down in weakness, stronger spirits still, or purer, the saviours of the race, have not descended into Hell, and perceived sorrow and pain to be disciplinary and transitional. Sorrow and pain, in varying measures, are the lot of all. The imagination, which quickens our perception of beauty and the things which make for joy, quickens also our sympathy with pain, and expands the torture of one of the lower animals into a cloud which darkens the universe. Our pains are more acute than our pleasures. The conditions of life are such that any hope built upon it seems at once to place man in the midst of a cynically indifferent universe. At any moment a malignant secretion may have lodged itself in our bodies, or, if not in us, in our nearest friend. We live, as it were, girt round with barriers of danger, necessity, delusion; and unless we can in some way see over them to an ulterior

consolation, all our joy is convicted as an infatuation and a dream.

It is quite clear, nevertheless, that living and meaning to live, as most of us do, we must believe in happiness as, in a manner, the positive side of life. That life is not intrinsically evil is a discovery made anew by our modern poets, and in particular by Wordsworth, who in "songs that speak of nothing more than what we are," gave praise to that nature, our situation in which was likened by the Hindus to that of a worm dropped amid a heap of ants or imprisoned in a reed kindled at both ends. We have discovered that man has original poetry in him as well as original sin, and that nature is not the devil. This nature which surrounds us, whose beauty and whose lore mankind the older it grows prizes the more; this nature, the contemplation of which is the sublime privilege of man, and which, as the scales of custom fall from his eyes, discloses to him the depth and continuation of his own nature, no longer appears to us the cruel foe of the human ideal, but the ally of our deepest convictions and confirmation of our inmost intuitions. Mankind is the babe of her cradle; and our filial love for her, which binds us to life, is at least as respectable as the cosmic love of the Archæus who engendered in the womb of things. It is notable that this 'love of nature,' still novel to the modern world, should

have appeared as a kind of warrant in human nature of that protest against the blind and fatal impetus of our civilization, made by our poets, which sets the claims of the individual in antithesis to those of society, and has succeeded in inspiring the serious-minded with a salutary misgiving as to material progress. Rousseau may not have understood culture: but his name must stand in some sense above every modern name if indeed he vindicated for the individual what society had confiscated from him, and though decried as a reactionary appealed to that in mankind which brought it a great stride forward on the path of its advance. The relationship of man to nature is a problem which every civilization works out as it may; and if progress be the process of that solution, how much does it owe to him who put men in fresh contact with nature! But for Rousseau, it is hard to say how much farther Europe might have been, than it is, on the road to the condition of China: nations, as the "Spectator" describes it, "of countless millions of self-seekers, in whom passive obedience to evil circumstances has become the first and most necessary quality, industry a universal disease, the conscience an atrophied entity. and all ideals subject to postponement in presence of the immediate necessity of the hour." Deprived of spontaneity and passion, or with its pas-

sions driven underground by the social necessity, humanity is a flowerless garden. Humanity flowers in souls who have 'wrought upon the plan that pleased their boyish thought.' For the soul deteriorates if it find not its joys; but when it finds them, and is conscious of them through what we term moral passion, there will ever be a new impulse to live communicated to men, in presence of which society will in vain erect its ideals of Stoicism and renunciation.

The logic of the pessimist is of service as it casts scorn on the attempt to give the world the argument which it seeks, to establish the compromise in which it believes, to mitigate the sternness of the Gospel injunctions and show that it, and not Christ and the martyrs, was right after all. From generation to generation the world awaits the synthesis of Christ and Antichrist, and a prophet who will recognise the genuine good-nature by which it is actuated and the grandiose designs which it has in view; yet to this day worldly wisdom remains one thing and divine wisdom another. It is true that the world does not offer the same violent contrasts as formerly between good and evil. Modern life has brought into existence a variety of interests and pursuits in respect to which it is absurd for the saints to assume an attitude of hostility. Many aspects of human nature which were

apparent to Shakespeare were unknown to Paul. There is present, besides the world and the spirit, a new element, nature, including its poetic and scientific interpretation. To the concentration demanded of the man of science a serene morality is requisite, to achieve which, in days more destitute of intellectual interest and social charm, St. Benedict was fain to cast his naked body among the bramble-bushes. Who shall indicate the point at which God and devil sunder in us now? The very zest of the sensual life is dulled for the countless numbers of men and women who to-day think and aspire; and we have reverted to that conception of a man's happiness as the measure of his wisdom which held ground before the great interruption of human development by Christian thought. In the case of the Tertullians of our own era, the Carlyles and Tolstois, it is impossible not to impute some wrong-headedness, or to seek some pathological explanation of their attitude. Has, then, the value of that old distinction between the world and the spirit become exhausted? Times are indeed changed when not only the children of light can assemble without fear of Nero or Claverhouse, but the world holds itself aggrieved because excluded from the more private meditations of some churlish idealist. Yet it must be said that the world, if it no longer burns and persecutes, evinces an inveterate desire to slay

the poet in us, the believer and the thinker, and this it does with men not individually only, but by nations and by races. In respect of the ideal, men grow up like cattle to the slaughter. Many improvements in education, in machinery, and in social life, are surely unexceptionable, and we stultify ourselves in criticising them: the poet in particular, unable to celebrate them in his song, is twitted with pusillanimity. Yet in their actual effect we see that they are but rails laid for the wholesale transport of humankind toward an end of which nothing is known, and that in what is termed progress men advance by a social momentum in which the individual aspiration is sacrificed. The fallacy lies in the assumption that as all men know more than one man, therefore society must be wiser than the individual. But it it not given to the world or to society to understand the law, but to the individual; and it is by a sure instinct that the poet is eternally jealous of that tendency which would realise perfection externally, and not in the soul. It is the fault of mankind, no doubt, that it cannot learn the lesson of life en masse, but only in the individual experience; so that instead of progress being continuous, mankind is ever being put back to the beginning, and history is a record of ebb and flow and of successive epochs.

We live in an age when all things are cheap; when we utilise lightning to warn our housekeeper

that we shall be late to dinner. Books are cheap, liberty is cheap, and it seems a small matter that every man should be put in secure possession of his own character and genius. "Beggars that we are, we are even poor in thanks." When we consider our birthright, and to how small account we turn it, we are driven to suppose that it is not increased knowledge of the physical cosmos, or formulation of the idea of God, which shall bring peace to our souls, but a new impulse to live, a new zest for morning, noon, and night, a new stirring of the spirit and setting of it toward the vast purposes of creation. There is an exact parallel between the political and spiritual progress of mankind, or rather the latter is the kernel of the former; and as kingdoms and enlightened constitutions must vanish, and all the noble types of character which they foster, to the bare end that the shuffling street malcontent may have the vote to which he is entitled by the premises of civilization, so that the champions of liberty recoil from so poor a result and advocate in their turn tyranny and absorption: so it is with the spiritual progress of mankind. Authority wanes, the feudal lords of thought are mulcted by criticism, till at last each of us is left with an equal and unchallenged right, but without a word to say for himself, in the presence of nature! Moral and political progress alike conduct us to a moment when the

supreme practical need is a new spiritual initiative; so that we arrive at this view of ourselves: a humanity, with infinite resources, but ignorant of itself, of its powers and of its destiny, confronting nature, unveiled before its eyes as never before! Whatever be the cosmic relation of human genius to the encompassing universe, whether it exist only on sufferance and be liable at any moment through some cosmic accident to extinction, or obey a compulsion which draws it on the path of its destiny, it is too soon to suspect, with Renan, that humanity will enter on no new lease of spiritual initiative. Great things have happened before, and great things will happen again. In spite of the Scylla and Charybdis of sensuality and ennui, the human soul is enamoured of the ideal. If one civilization fail it shall be eaten up by its sins and a new civilization shall be born. "I produce myself among creatures, O son of Bharata, when there is a decline of virtue and an insurrection of vice and injustice in the world; and thus I incarnate from age to age for the preservation of the just, the destruction of the wicked, and the establishment of righteousness."

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